

**Saint Paul Planning Commission
City Hall Conference Center
15 Kellogg Boulevard West**

Minutes August 24, 2012

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, August 24, 2012, at 8:30 a.m. in the Conference Center of City Hall.

Commissioners Present: Mmes. Merrigan, Noecker, Perrus, Porter, Reveal, Thao, Wang, Wencl; and Messrs. Connolly, Edgerton, Gelgelu, Lindeke, Nelson, Oliver, Spaulding, Ward, and Wickiser.

Commissioners Absent: Ms. *Shively, and Messrs. *Ochs, and *Schertler.
*Excused

Also Present: David Kuebler, Department of Public Works; Lucy Thompson, Patricia James, Kate Reilly, Christina Morrison, Mary Matze and Sonja Butler, Department of Planning and Economic Development staff.

I. Approval of minutes August 10, 2012.

MOTION: *Commissioner Merrigan moved approval of the minutes of August 10, 2012. Commissioner Thao seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

II. Chair's Announcements

Chair Wencl announced that Commissioner Halverson has resigned from her duties as a Planning Commissioner.

III. Planning Director's Announcements

The Acting Planning Director, Lucy Thompson, gave the report. The City Council adopted an interim ordinance for Island Station to prohibit any demolition until the Great River Passage Master Plan is completed and a study has been done to determine the building's eligibility for the National or State Register of Historic Places or as a City heritage preservation site. The ordinance is in place for one year. City Council set the public hearing date to consider approval of a permanent extension of the sidewalk improvements on the north side of E. Sixth Street between Sibley and Wacouta streets.

Ms. Thompson announced that the Saint Paul Riverfront Corporation, City Parks Department, National Park Service and partners are offering to take the Planning Commission and interested City Councilmembers on a boat tour of the river to better understand the recommendations in the Great River Passage Master Plan, currently before the Planning Commission. This is in preparation for the public hearing on September 21, 2012.

Ms. Thompson also announced that, under the Transportation Committee items, the Lilydale Regional Park-Roadway, Trail and Environmental Clean Up has been pulled from the agenda. It was meant to be an informational item at the Committee, and the full Commission will get a chance to act on the project when it comes through for a conditional use permit.

IV. Zoning Committee

STAFF SITE PLAN REVIEW – List of current applications. *(Tom Beach, 651/266-9086)*

Four items came before the Site Plan Review Committee on Tuesday, August 14, 2012:

- Remo Convenience Store, pump relocation at 1200 Rice Street.
- Bang Brewery, new micro brewery building at 2320 Capp Road.
- Treacy Car Wash, demo building and build 3,000 sq. ft. car wash and parking lot at 1588 Energy Park Drive.
- Schmidt Bottling Warehouse Annex, parking lot and building reconstruction at 888 7th Street West.

Two items to come before the Site Plan Review Committee on Tuesday, August 28, 2012:

- Bolander New parking Lot and Landscaping, 50,000 square feet parking and green space at 222 Starkey Street.
- Gerda Recycling Facility at South port, metal recycling facility with 2 new shop buildings and a new office building at 750 Barge Channel Road.

NO BUSINESS

V. Comprehensive Planning Committee

Commissioner Merrigan announced that the next Comprehensive Planning Committee meeting is on Tuesday, September 4, 2012. She briefly reviewed upcoming Committee agenda items.

VI. Neighborhood Planning Committee

Community Residential Facilities Zoning Study – Approve resolution initiating study.
(Patricia James, 651/266-6639)

MOTION: *Chair Wencl moved on behalf of the Neighborhood Planning Committee to recommend approval of the resolution initiating a zoning study. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

Nonconforming Use Text Amendments – Approve resolution recommending adoption of nonconforming use text amendments by the Mayor and City Council.
(Patricia James, 651/266-6639)

MOTION: *Chair Wencil moved on behalf of the Neighborhood Planning Committee to recommend approval of the resolution and forward to the Mayor and City Council for adoption of the nonconforming use text amendments. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

District del Sol Plan – Recommendation to release for public review and set public hearing for October 5, 2012. (Kate Reilly, 651/266-6618)

Kate Reilly, PED staff, went through the plan, showing a map of the study area, which follows the same boundaries as were used for the District del Sol Zoning Study that was completed in 2010. The Planning Commission resolution adopted October 2010 initiated the study with a focus on the area at Robert and Cesar Chavez Streets, particularly on prime development sites in the study area. The participants in the study, Riverview Economic Development Association (REDA), Neighborhood Development Alliance (NeDA), and West Side Community Organization (WSCO), had 8 task force meetings, 11 steering committee meetings, and 8 community meetings. The plan developed strategies for redevelopment of key sites in the study area while preserving the existing business climate, analyzed parking and traffic in the study area, completed a market study and gap analysis for the study area, and made recommendations about public open spaces and “creative place-making” strategies along Cesar Chavez.

The plan lays out objectives and strategies for nine key elements, tied to the city’s Comprehensive Plan. The vision that they established is that District del Sol is a community where the natural environment is protected and restored, land use is consistent with a mixed-use transit-oriented neighborhood, commercial vitality is measured by choice and variety, public realm and transportation options support a thriving commercial district, open space enriches daily life, community development meets the wide range of resident and business needs, public art is an integral element in expressing cultural values, and historic preservation is an integral element in sustaining community character. The first section of the plan addresses natural resources, water resources, and energy efficiency. It encourages public and private projects to protect and enhance the natural landscape within the context of redevelopment. The plan seeks to improve business energy efficiency through audits, solar installations and education. The land use section seeks to promote development that is compatible with an urban, mixed-use, transit-oriented commercial corridor. The section called “commercial vitality” seeks to support and retain the current business mix, attract complementary new businesses, and continue to market the District del Sol brand. In the “public realm and transportation” section, the plan seeks to improve the pedestrian environment to connect the three commercial nodes, eliminate confusion and increase safety at the Robert/Cesar Chavez intersection, provide adequate parking to meet demand, and accommodate bicycles. Public art will remain an important feature in District del Sol. There are several art pieces on the West Side and the plan seeks to ensure those elements are retained in new developments. As for historic preservation, the plan recommends that the design of infill construction reflect the established neighborhood character. There is also a recommendation to survey historic resources in the district and develop public educational programs around the historic resources on the West Side.

Accompanying the plan are the market and parking studies. The market analysis recommends business types that would fit well with the existing mix, which includes auto parts, cards and gifts, coffee shop, sporting goods, book store, optician, pet supplies, and a small electronics store. The market research estimates new retail demand in the district of approximately 11,000 sq. ft. through 2015 and 22,000 sq. ft. through 2020. Concepts were also developed for redevelopment at three sites in the district. These concepts included affordable rental housing with small retail

spaces. The parking study provides general information about parking supply and use in the study area with the results suggesting that the current supply is more than adequate and there is parking capacity to meet future demand. The plan can be found on the City's website at: <http://www.stpaul.gov/DocumentCenter/View/58815>

Commissioner Connolly asked who represented the private development point of view.

Commissioner Wickiser said that there were some brokers from Java.

Ms. Reilly added that the Riverview Economic Development Association (REDA) and the Neighborhood Development Alliance (NeDA) were functioning as developers on the West Side at the time and NeDA continues to function as a developer and they were also included in the task force.

Commissioner Connolly said that on page 29, LU1.4 "Create a site assembly program to provide parcels of sufficient size" tactically what does that look like, what's a program like that look like?

Ms. Reilly said it is really focusing on assembling underutilized parcels that are a sufficient size for redevelopment.

Commissioner Thao asked if the Neighborhood House at 179 Robie is included in the study.

Ms. Reilly replied no, that it is outside of the study area.

Commissioner Edgerton commented on the recommendation on p. 7 to "establish stricter Capital Region Watershed District standards" and he thinks this is something that should be run through the Public Works Sewers section as well as the water resources coordinator. Those are the people who are going to implement this and they are going to want to weigh in on this recommendation. Also regarding the pedestrian plaza and what it might look like, he likes the idea of public art and making it pedestrian friendly, but there is not much in the plan in the way of graphics showing a vision of what it could be and he would like to see more of that.

Ms. Reilly said that they will definitely go back to Public Works Sewers and the water resources coordinator to talk about the watershed recommendations. As for coming up with a concept design, which is a good idea, resources are limited because the consultant has completed the work and she is not sure she can go back and ask for that change, but she will try.

Commissioner Merrigan asked if it was generally the City's policy when it has some potential designated development sites to designate the local development association as the temporary developer as opposed to opportunities for other developers from other sources to compete for the development.

Ms. Reilly said that when temporary developer status is being considered, the developer who is interested in a site submits a proposal to the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA). The HRA posts the proposal on the web site for 45 days, and if no one comes forward with alternate proposals, staff moves forward with the proposal and grants temporary developer status for a specific amount of time. Otherwise, if there are multiple proposals, those are analyzed and one will be selected to move forward by the HRA.

Lucy Thompson, PED Principal Planner, asked Ms. Reilly to talk about the Livable Communities Demonstration Account (LCDA) grant.

Ms. Reilly said that one of the things they did in the process of implementing the plan was apply for a LCDA pre-development grant. The goal of this grant is to have some concept designs put together by an architect for 430 South Robert and the former Commercial Club sites, so that they can have an idea of what they want those corners to look like as they're approaching developers. The grant proposal includes developing cost estimates and pulling together concepts for what buildings could look like. This proposal is currently being reviewed by the Metropolitan Council, with interviews scheduled for September 27th.

Commissioner Lindeke asked about the inclusion of auto parts stores and do they need to be included?

Ms. Reilly said that they were looking at gaps and they identified stores that could fit within the available spaces. Specifically listing auto parts could be deleted from the bullet point.

Commissioner Connolly said that before it's taken off, he would argue that it could be quite inspiring if you're the person who wants to open the store.

Commissioner Perrus assumes that auto parts are an allowed use in that area. She pointed out that there is no need to take it out of the bullet if it is an allowed use and if the community feels that an auto parts store could fill a need in the community.

MOTION: *Commissioner Ward moved on behalf of the Neighborhood Planning Committee to release the draft for public review and set a public hearing on October 5, 2012. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

Chair Wencil announced that there is no Neighborhood Planning Committee meeting next week.

VII. Transportation Committee

Lilydale Regional Park-Roadway, Trail and Environmental Clean Up - Approve resolution recommending the roadway, trail, and environmental clean up plans for Lilydale Regional Park. (Christina Morrison, 651/266-6546)

Lucy Thompson, PED staff, announced that this item was pulled from the agenda. Official Planning Commission action will occur when Parks applies for a conditional use permit.

Charles Avenue Project – Approve resolution recommending the project to the Mayor and City Council. (Christina Morrison, 651/266-6546)

Christina Morrison, PED staff gave some background on the Charles Avenue Project, including planning documents and neighborhood process. David Kuebler, Traffic Engineer, Department of Public Works, outlined the geography and design components of the project, including striping, signage, partial and full medians, traffic circles, and a raised intersection. Kuebler noted that the proposal includes opening up Sherburne Avenue at the Snelling median as part of the Charles closure, because of the need to provide access to some of the local businesses.

Christina Morrison noted that the Transportation Committee recommended approval of the design, with the change to leave the median closed at Sherburne and Snelling.

Commissioner Spaulding recounted the discussion and informal public testimony at the Transportation Committee regarding the Snelling median in particular. Richard Purcell, the funeral home owner, expressed support for the project, but worried about safety and how cars would reach his business. Mr. Purcell provided a list of alternative ideas for crossing Snelling. Spaulding recalled that Charles Avenue had already been shown as a bike route in several adopted plans, and concluded that none of the alternatives from Mr. Purcell made sense, and the committee modified the staff recommendation to recommend leaving the Sherburne median closed.

Commissioner Nelson asked about raised intersections and which proposed medians are already closed. Mr. Kuebler stated that a raised intersection has about two or three inches of elevation change for the entire intersection between the curb lines and the gutter lines. Kuebler added that all the closed intersections that are being proposed - Snelling, Lexington, Dale and Marion – are currently all open.

Commissioner Nelson asked if this would increase the stretch of closed median to twice what it currently is, from two blocks to four blocks. Mr. Keubeler agreed; vehicles would turn every four blocks instead of every two blocks on streets like Lexington, while bikes and peds could cross every two blocks.

Commissioner Ward expressed concern that landscaping in traffic circles may reduce sight lines, and asked about the public involvement process. Mr. Kuebler noted that landscaping would maintain visibility for all users, and Ms. Morrison outlined the extensive public process provided through the District Councils, Friendly Streets Initiative, and the City.

Commissioner Noecker asked about existing signalization on Charles, and Mr. Kuebler responded that there are not any signalizations on any part of Charles currently.

Commissioner Noecker noted that the Midway Chamber of Commerce is concerned about crossing Snelling without any kind of signal light. Commissioner Spaulding reviewed what the committee discussed as some of the benefits: left turn conflicts are eliminated and bikes and pedestrians can use a refuge to shorten crossing distance. He noted that the Transportation Committee was comfortable with this improvement.

Commissioner Perrus asked about stacking for turn lanes. Mr. Kuebler noted that Public Works will monitor that as the project is implemented, but displacing turn volumes from Charles are not expected to cause stacking issues at other locations.

Commissioner Wang discussed her involvement in the Friendly Streets initiative, both professionally and as a resident of Hamline-Midway. She noted that the process was thoughtful and a model for participation processes.

Mr. Kuebler said that the left turns for Sherburne would still allow significant stacking for the University and Snelling intersection.

Commissioner Porter asked about potential conflicts with the rapid bus concept. Ms. Morrison noted that there is no conflict, and that the medians should make it safer to access transit.

Commissioner Edgerton spoke of how the business that is opposed to the project is a destination business, and that it will benefit from having turn lanes at Sherburne.

Commissioner Connolly asked staff to define the term “chicane.” Mr. Kuebler said a chicane uses bump outs on the roadway creating a weaving traffic movement through the area. The intent is to slow vehicles down.

Commissioner Oliver asked about Thomas as an alternative bikeway route. Ms. Morrison reviewed previous planning and noted that Thomas and other streets were considered, but did not provide good access to University Avenue businesses. Rerouting bicyclists from University to Thomas adds a quarter-mile each way, and Thomas is a higher traffic street than Charles.

Commissioner Oliver asked why a straight east-west route is needed. Ms. Morrison outlined the planning done in the Bike Walk Central Corridor Action Plan and Comprehensive Plan, and the desired goals to create legible and intuitive bikeways.

Chair Wenl asked about the width of the median at Charles and Snelling. Mr. Kuebler stated it would be approximately 16 feet wide.

Commissioner Reveal moved to modify the committee’s resolution to add a left turn at Sherburne. Commissioner Lindeke moved to substitute the city staff’s resolution instead of the Transportation Committee’s resolution.

MOTION TO AMEND: *Commissioner Linkeke moved to amend the motion from the Transportation Committee by substituting the City staff’s resolution recommending approval of the Charles Avenue Project as presented in the July 25th public hearing draft. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

MOTION: *Commissioner Spaulding moved to approve the substitute resolution recommending the project to the Mayor and City Council. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

Commissioner Spaulding announced that the Transportation Committee meeting on Monday, August 27th is cancelled. There is an all day workshop which the Transportation Committee is a part of on Wednesday, August 29, 2012 to discuss the Street Design Manual.

VIII. Communications Committee

Commissioner Thao had no report.

IX. Task Force/Liaison Reports

None.

X. Old Business

None.

XI. New Business

None.

XII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:07 a.m.

Recorded and prepared by
Sonja Butler, Planning Commission Secretary
Planning and Economic Development Department,
City of Saint Paul

Respectfully submitted,



Donna Drummond
Planning Director

Approved September 21, 2012

(Date)



Daniel Ward II
Secretary of the Planning Commission